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Donncha O'Rourke

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Donncha O'Rourke

# 'Eastern' Elegy and 'Western' Epic: reading 'orientalism' in Propertius 4 and Virgil's *Aeneid*

Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions ; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient ; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world. It is, rather, a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts ; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains ; it is, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world.<sup>i</sup>

## Introduction

- 1 The generic and geographical coordinates encoded in 'eastern' elegy and 'western' epic propose an identification of elegy with the Orient and of epic with the Occident. The adherence of these labels owes less to the alleged historical origins of elegy in Phrygia (by some accounts, Homer was no less eastern)<sup>ii</sup> than to elegy's self-construction in contradistinction to epic, as the binary opposite of a genre whose underlying narrative is consistently one of western hegemony (of the Greek world over Troy, of Trojan Rome over Greece and the world).
- 2 It matters less that the *Iliad* does not in fact polarise Greeks and barbarians than that it was constructed as doing so by readers situated in the anti-Persian context of Classical Athens, a context which has mediated readings of Homer to this day.<sup>iii</sup> Thucydides may have recognised that Homeric epic eschews the word *barbaros*,<sup>iv</sup> but he also sees the Trojan expedition as an originary act of Hellenic unity (Thuc. 1.3). For Isocrates (*Paneg.* 159) Homer glorified those who fought against the barbarians (τοὺς πολεμήσαντας τοῖς βαρβάροις) and bequeathed to posterity a model both of the enmity which exists towards them (τὴν ἔχθραν τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν πρὸς αὐτούς) and of the virtue of those who went on campaign against them (τὰς ἀρετὰς τῶν στρατευσαμένων).<sup>v</sup>
- 3 Western hegemony is the narrative also of Roman epic, whether narrated 'imperially', from the perspective of the victorious, or 'romantically', through the eyes of the defeated : recognising this bifurcation, David Quint finds that the "Virgilian tradition of imperial dominance is the stronger tradition, the defining tradition of Western epic".<sup>vi</sup> It is also a tradition which, unlike Homeric epic, defines the West itself : thus, for example, Anchises prophesies an Augustus Caesar who 'will advance his empire beyond the Garamants and Indians' (*super et Garamantes et Indos | proferet imperium*, *Aen.* 6.794-5). In this way, the *Aeneid* retrojects into the Homeric past the orientalist dichotomy of the Augustan present : the un-Homeric adjective with which Aeneas describes the ruined bridal chambers of the Trojan palace (*barbarico postes auro spoliisque superbi | procubere ; tenent Danaï qua deficit ignis*, 'the doors proud with the spoils of barbaric gold, fall low ; where the fire fails, the Greeks hold sway', *Aen.* 2.504-5) recurs in this form in the *Aeneid* only of Marc Antony, pictured on Aeneas' shield 'with barbaric might' (*ope barbarica*, *Aen.* 8.685) as he musters 'the strength of the East' (*uirisque Orientis*, 687).<sup>vii</sup> That Virgil is in both cases echoing a phrase of Ennian tragedy (*o Priami domus ... uidi ego te adstante ope barbarica*, Enn. trag. 87-9 Jocelyn) suggests that the *Annales*, too, will have anticipated the *Aeneid* in confirming epic as the poetic embodiment of occidental imperialism.<sup>viii</sup>
- 4 To the extent that it constructs itself in opposition to epic, then, elegy might be said to distance itself from an Occidental agenda and to associate itself with an Oriental alternative. Propertius'

putative association with Antony will suggest one way in which this idea may be explored,<sup>ix</sup> the exoticism of Propertius' language another.<sup>x</sup> Such material requires careful evaluation, however : Antonian affinities are not necessarily valorized or legitimised by elegy,<sup>xi</sup> and the genre's exoticism, palpable even in the names of the elegiac mistresses, reflects a wider context in which the elegiac lifestyle and its props are luxury imports predicated on imperialist expansion.<sup>xii</sup>

- 5 The labelling of epic and elegy as 'western' and 'eastern' might also be seen as an extension of, or a possibility created by, the similarly binary association of gender and genre. Recent studies have explored (and sometimes deconstructed) the tendency of epic to gender itself as male and the opposing tendency of elegy to gender itself as female, each asserting its default identity with self-conscious headlines : the opening of the *Aeneid* (*Arma uirumque cano*) first echoes and then translates the androcentric *incipit* of the *Odyssey* (Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε);<sup>xiii</sup> the opening of the Propertian corpus (*Cynthia prima*) first enacts and then declares the ostensible gynocentrism of elegy.<sup>xiv</sup> Although Said's account of 'orientalism' has been criticised for its perceived omission of gender,<sup>xv</sup> a similar distinction between 'male' west and 'female' east can be identified as a polarity operative in 'orientalist' discourse.<sup>xvi</sup> It follows, not without circularity, that the genres of epic and elegy should exhibit 'western' and 'eastern' characteristics respectively, with each scrutinising the other in the construction of itself : 'western' epic is necessarily tough, rational, civilised, and masculine, while 'oriental' elegy is weak, irrational, uncivilised, and effeminate.<sup>xvii</sup> However, to equate elegy and epic with the polarities of orientalist discourse is not merely to reconfigure gender-focussed analysis. While gender remains a conspicuous theme in (our feminist and post-feminist readings of) Latin elegy and epic, in an orientalist context even the idea of male superiority plays handmaid to occidental geopolitical hegemony. To a paper which sees genre circulating with gender within the framework of Said's orientalism, then, the well-known confrontation of elegy and epic in Propertius 4 offers a rich case-study also for the interface of East and West.<sup>xviii</sup>

## Propertius and Horos (Propertius 4.1)

- 6 The first elegy of Propertius 1 had opened with the primacy of Cynthia and her emasculation of the poet-lover (1.1.1-4), and looked east to Hellenistic models (Callimachus and possibly Philetas) with the exotic *exemplum* of Milanion and Atalanta (1.1.9-16).<sup>xix</sup> At the other extreme of the Propertian corpus, something quite the opposite occurs. The first elegy of Propertius 4 looks west to *maxima Roma* and, intertextually, to Virgil's *Aeneid* (4.1.1-4) :<sup>xx</sup>

HOC quodcumque uides, hospes, qua maxima Roma est,  
ante Phrygem Aenean collis et herba fuit,  
atque ubi Nauali stant sacra Palatia Phoebos,  
Euandri profugae concubuerunt boues.

Everything you can see here, my friend, where the great city of Rome is, before Phrygian Aeneas was hill and grass ; and where stands the Palatine sacred to Naval Phoebus, the migrant cattle of Evander once lay together.

- 7 Although temporally located 'before Aeneas', these lines clearly survey the literary landscape after the *Aeneid* :<sup>xxi</sup> the names of Aeneas and Evander, the exiled cattle, the interplay of humble past and magnificent present, and the memory of Actium signal collectively the presence in Propertian elegy of Virgil's epic on Rome and nationhood. The ensuing celebration of early Roman and Italian asceticism, rusticity, and religiosity makes a "resounding understatement" of the declaration, postponed until line 39, of Troy's good fortune in finding such a destination (*huc melius profugos misisti, Troia, Penates*, 'Here, Troy, you sent the fleeing Penates to a better future').<sup>xxii</sup> Snapshots from the *Aeneid* (41-50 : the wooden horse ; the flight from burning Troy ; Venus' delivery of 'the victorious arms of resurgent Troy' ; the Sibyl's prophecy) shade into a reminiscence of Lycophron's *Alexandra* (itself an intoxicating narrative of east-west conflict<sup>xxiii</sup> that encloses much of the same material<sup>xxiv</sup>) when Cassandra's prophecy of

geopolitical reversal in Greece's submission to Trojan Rome (*uertite equum, Danaï : male uincitis. Ilia tellus | uiuet, et huic cineri Iuppiter arma dabit*, 'Greeks, turn the horse : it is futile for you to win. The land of Ilium will live, and Jupiter will give arms to this ash', 53-4) belatedly proves true to Priam.<sup>xxv</sup> Climactically, Propertius proclaims his native Umbria as the homeland of Rome's Callimachus (*Umbria Romani patria Callimachi*, 64) and so concludes his foray into the narrative of occidental hegemony with a personal endorsement of Rome as the artistic capital of Italy and the Greek world.

8 The task of arresting Propertius' newfound interest in epic, masculinity, and the West is assigned, in what is conventionally called 4.1b, to a speaker who boasts a strikingly oriental lineage (*me creat Archytas suboles, Babylonius Orops, | Horon, et a proauo ducta Conone domus*, 'Babylonian Orops, the offspring of Archytas, fathered me, Horos, and the house derives from our forefather Conon', 78-9).<sup>xxvi</sup> It is perhaps not surprising that this easterner goes on to champion the 'orientalising' aspects of Propertian elegy, in particular the poet-lover's ineluctable subservience to *una puella* (140), but also the 'romantic' focalisation of imperialism from the perspective of its casualties.

9 Thus, whereas Propertius reads Virgil and Lycophron for the narrative of Troy's resurrection as imperialist Rome, Horos eschews the *Aeneid* and rereads the *Alexandra* from the alternative perspective : the echo in 87-8 (*dicam 'Troia, cades, et, Troica Roma, resurges' ; | et maris et terrae longa sepulchra canam*, 'I shall say, 'Troy, you will fall, and, Trojan Rome, you will rise,' and I shall sing a catalogue of tombs on land and sea')<sup>xxvii</sup> of Lycophron's controversial prediction of Roman dominion (γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης σκῆπτρα καὶ μοναρχίαν | λαβόντες, '[Cassandra's descendants] obtaining the sceptre and monarchy of earth and sea', 1229-30)<sup>xxviii</sup> has been taken to recommend Mueller's transposition of the couplet to precede the earlier Lycophronian reminiscence in 53-4,<sup>xxix</sup> but it might also be taken to initiate a sequence in which Horos neuters the intertext of its imperialism (in which case *longa sepulchra* need not be emended)<sup>xxx</sup> by focussing on the disasters suffered by the returning Greeks (113-16, cf. *Alex.* 365-1089) rather than on the new empire taking their place, on Cassandra's victimisation (117-8, cf. *Alex.* 348-64) rather than on her role as prophet of her nation's future glory.<sup>xxxi</sup> Propertius had traced that glory to the auspicious arrival of the Trojan Penates in Italy, but Horos now relates how a grasping Roman mother enlisted her twin sons in the foreign legions and doomed them never to return *ad patrios ... Penates* (89-98).

10 Whereas Propertius celebrates Umbria's service to Rome, Horos defamiliarises the poet's homeland (*qua nebuloso cauo rorat Meuania campo | et lacus aestiuus intepet Umber aquis*, 'where misty Mevania is moist in its deep-lying plain, and the Umbrian lake warms up with summer waters', 123-4) to evoke its 'otherness' and to commemorate the site of its capitulation to Roman integration in 308 BC.<sup>xxxii</sup> He then reminds the poet of more recent acts of imperialist bullying, the agrarian confiscations of 41 BC, in which the Propertian *gens* was dispossessed (*abstulit excultas pertica tristis opes*, 'the grim surveyor's pole took away the cultivated wealth', 130).

11 Climactically, whereas Propertius had proclaimed himself the 'Roman Callimachus' to sing of Rome's occidental *militia*, Horos restages (and at 4.1.133-40 alludes to) the Callimachean Apollo's intervention in the *Aetia* Prologue conversely to delimit Propertian elegy to the sphere of *militia amoris* (135-8) :<sup>xxxiii</sup>

at tu finge elegos, fallax opus (haec tua castra),  
scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo.  
militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis  
et Veneris pueris utilis hostis eris.

You are to compose elegies, deceitful work : this will be your campaign, so that the rest of the crowd may write in imitation of you. You will endure military service under the attractive arms of Venus, and you will be an easy opponent for Venus's sons.

12 This imperative to promote in elegiac art a highly unRoman subject position<sup>xxxiv</sup> aptly inverts the famous conclusion of the Virgilian Parade of Heroes (*Aen.* 6.847-53) in which Anchises

leaves to the Other (*alii*, 847) the activities of sculpture, oratory, and astronomy, and assigns to the Roman the 'arts' of empire (851-3):<sup>xxxv</sup>

*tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento  
(haec tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem,  
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*

you, Roman, be sure to rule the world (these be your arts), to crown peace with justice, to spare the vanquished and to crush the proud.

- 13 Identified as an 'opponent for Venus's sons' (137), Propertius is not merely Cupid's target, but also the adversary of his proto-Roman brother, Aeneas. Whereas Anchises commands the Roman to war down the proud, Horos prophesies (also *post eventum*) that *una puella* will elude the elegist's grasp and thwart his victories (*nam tibi uictrices quascumque labore pararis, | eludet palmas una puella tuas*, 'For whatever symbols of victory you gain with your labour, one girl will elude your palms', 139-40: *palmas* suggests both 'grasp' and 'victory palms'), subjecting him to her dominion instead (141-6). In Horos' response to Propertius, the outsider's perspective on imperialist dominion as a narrative of destruction and self-destruction shades into a parallel narrative of erotic emasculation and domination.
- 14 In this way, the oriental Horos of 4.1b systematically inverts the occidental Propertius of 4.1a. Taken as a whole, elegy 4.1 articulates the polarity within Propertius 4 between epic and elegy, a polarity also expressed through the interplay of male and female interests, and through attendant geographical or ethnographical oppositions. However, the aetiological and erotic poles of the book are not mutually exclusive: erotic aetiologies and aetiological love-poems collapse the poles of masculine epic and feminine elegy, such that no elegy can be categorised strictly according to one or the other.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Within the masculine and western first half of 4.1, too, Propertius can be seen to read Virgilian epic for its 'oriental' elements. While, on first appearances, late Propertian elegy seemed to rescind its former ties with the feminine and the east (*Cynthia prima*) and to declare allegiance to the masculine and the west (*maxima Roma*), the elegist's use of the epithet 'Phrygian' (4.1.2) to describe Aeneas also signposts from the outset that which within masculine and western epic connotes the effeminate Orient. In the *Aeneid*, occidental extremism is represented by the protests of Iarbas (4.215-7), Turnus (12.99-100) and, most vehemently, Numanus Remulus (9.598-620), for whom Aeneas' Phrygian provenance serves as a catch-all slur (614-20):

*uobis picta croco et fulgenti murice uestis,  
desidia cordi, iuuat indulgere choreis, 615  
et tunicae manicas et habent redimicula mitrae.  
o uere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges, ite per alta  
Dindyma, ubi adsuetis biformem dat tibia cantum.  
tympana uos buxusque uocat Berecynthia Matris  
Idaeae; sinite arma uiris et cedite ferro. 620*

But you wear embroidered saffron and gleaming purple; sloth is your joy, your delight is to enjoy the dance; your tunics have sleeves and your turbans ribbons. Phrygian women, indeed! – for Phrygian men you are not – go over the heights of Dindymus, where to accustomed ears the pipe utters music from double mouths! The timbrels call you, and the Berecynthian boxwood of the mother Ida: leave arms to men, and quit the sword.

- 15 For this racial fundamentalist, *Phrygius* connotes the effeminate, weak, and irrational composition of the 'other', the mirror image of his own *durum a stirpe genus* (603).<sup>xxxvii</sup> Here, then, Virgil confronts head-on the problematic stereotype of the barbarized Trojan read into Homeric epic in fifth-century Athens. By extension, Numanus' defence of Italy's occidental purity is also implicitly a defence of the epic genre from oriental and effeminate incursion: his imperative to the Trojan heroes, whom he regenders as 'Phrygian women' (617) to 'leave arms to men' (*sinite arma uiris*, 620) invokes the *incipit* of the *Aeneid* as if to suggest that easterners by essence have no business in epic.<sup>xxxviii</sup> An uncompromising and unapologetic spokesman for racial extremism, Numanus polices the borders of geography and genre.

- 16 Without necessarily positing an allusion to Numanus' speech in Propertius 4.1, the intertextual connotations of the epithet *Phrygius* are nonetheless such that its application to Aeneas at 4.1.2 can be taken as an allusion to the tension inherent in the Roman foundation myth as presented by Virgil. For Richard Thomas, Numanus' speech is a nodal point in Virgil's lament for the lost innocence of pristine Italy, a speech which points to "the moral degeneracy which is a part ... of modern Roman civilisation".<sup>xxxix</sup> Contrary to views of Roman xenophobia and racial discrimination, however, Erich Gruen has argued that the heterogeneity integral to the Roman foundation narrative is one among many signs of a Roman predisposition and openness to ethnic pluralism.<sup>xi</sup> On this view, the ensuing removal of the unsympathetic Numanus by Ascanius' bowshot could be taken to hail the advent of a less uncompromising and more pluralistic Italy. The divergent responses to Virgil's presentation of Trojan immigration are read by James O'Hara as a symptom of "functional indeterminacy" in the morality of pre- and post-Trojan Italy as presented by Virgil.<sup>xii</sup> The plurality of views identified by Emma Dench in Roman discussions of ethnicity and nationhood thus finds itself reflected within the Virgilian text.<sup>xlii</sup>
- 17 Propertius 4.1 offers a more one-sided reading of Virgilian indeterminacy, first signposting and then subtly illustrating the 'orientalising' effect on proto-Rome of the Phrygian influx. Propertius might thus be said to tease out the implications detected by readers such as Thomas in the Virgilian presentation of indigenous Italy, and so to expose a reading of the *Aeneid* that is congenial to the oriental perspective of elegy. It is well-recognised that the past-present juxtapositions in Propertius 4.1 are inspired by Virgil's contrasts between 'now' and 'then' in *Aeneid* 8 (only from the inverse temporal perspective).<sup>xliii</sup> However, the temporal marker embedded in the phrase *ante Phrygem Aenean* at Propertius 4.1.2 suggests that the event which divides past from present, and which is therefore the catalyst of change, was the arrival of the Trojans, itself postponed until line 39 (*huc melius profugos misisti, Troia, Penates*). Thus, the seemingly casual assertion that before Phrygian Aeneas 'an artlessly built cottage used not to be a cause of shame' (*nec fuit opprobrio facta sine arte casa*, 6) offers an implicit comment on later attitudes to domestic comfort. Similarly, that there existed no saffron-reeking theatre (15-16) or foreign religion (17-18) before Phrygian Aeneas implies that these potentially dubious innovations attended the arrival of the Trojans:<sup>xliv</sup> as Hutchinson points out on 15-16, "[b]oth hexameter and pentameter end with visibly Greek words [*theatrum* ; *crocus*], and suggest foreign culture and luxury";<sup>xlv</sup> the contrast in 17-18 between native Italian ritual (*patrio ... sacro*) and later foreign religion (*externos ... diuos*) might bring to mind the importation of the Magna Mater, the Trojan cult lambasted by Numanus for its effeminacy.<sup>xlvi</sup>
- 18 The disjunction between pre- and post-Trojan Italy in Propertius is far more clear-cut than its 'functionally indeterminate' Virgilian counterpart also in regard to the militarisation of the indigenous population. The *Aeneid* illustrates a much more blurred division between the pre- and post-Trojan eras when the newcomers' hubris (Ascanius has shot Silvia's stag) is met with iron resistance (*Aen.* 7.523-6) :

non iam certamine agresti  
stipitibus duris agitur sudibusue praeustis,  
sed ferro ancipiti decernunt atraque late  
horrescit strictis seges ensibus

now they do not contend in rustic quarrel with heavy clubs or seared stakes, but with two-edged steel they try the issue ; far and wide bristles a dark harvest of drawn swords

- 19 The abandonment of wooden stakes for weapons of steel and the perversion of agricultural imagery (*non ... agresti*) in the crop of swords suggest that the Latins are ready for more than a rustic squabble. The subsequent reopening of the Gates of War (7.601-8) and re-tempering of *patrios ... enses* ('their forefathers' swords', 7.636 : contrast *Geo.* 1.506-8) explodes the myth of an 'Arcadian' Italy. Contrariwise, Propertius 4.1 maintains that, before Phrygian Aeneas, the rustic soldier knew battles only with the wooden stake (27-8) :

nec rudis infestis miles **radiabat** in armis :

miscabant usta proelia nuda sude.

nor did the novice soldier shine in hostile armour : they joined unarmoured battles with burnt staves.

20 Moreover, in fighting without shining weapons, the *rudis* ... *miles* does without the resplendent equipment brought to Aeneas by Venus (*arma sub aduersa posuit radiantia quercu*, '[she] set up the radiant arms under an oak before him', *Aen.* 8.616 : the verb *radiare* occurs only here in Propertius). There may have been rustic squabbles in the Propertian view of aboriginal Italy, but the implication that metal *arma* were a Trojan innovation implicitly corrects the Virgilian picture of a pre-militarised native Italy and complements the recurrent insinuation that the Trojan immigration had a detrimental effect.

21 These differences do not necessarily register a fundamental ideological disagreement with Virgil, and oriental elegy may not be quite so far distant from occidental epic as it seems. The two-way traffic of intertextuality is such that Propertius' allusions to Virgil serve not only to make elegy more 'epic', masculine, and 'western' ; it also exposes what in Virgil is less 'epic', less masculine, and more 'oriental'. Propertius' self-identification with Callimachus (4.1.64) is both a declaration of elegy's 'foreign' aesthetic but also itself an act of literary imperialism. In like manner, Virgilian epic is at once 'orientalising' and intertextually imperialist in its incorporation of, among other 'eastern' models, the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius and, in *Aeneid* 8 in particular, Callimachus' *Aetia*.<sup>xlvii</sup> In the *Georgics*, Virgil is more explicit in advertising his intertextual appropriations as a form of triumphant imperialism, but the same can be said of the *Aeneid* : as Philip Hardie has written, "The *Aeneid* itself is the monument to the final naturalization on Roman soil of Greek cultural goods transported from the east, a journey parallel to that of its hero Aeneas, from east to west, from the world of Homer to the world of Augustus."<sup>xlviii</sup>

## Hercules (Propertius 4.9)

22 Aeneas' journey from east to west is inverted in Propertius 4.9 when the Virgilian Hercules, Aeneas' typological precursor in the *Aeneid*, sets out from Erythea, the mythical island of the far west, and travels east to Rome (4.9.1-3) :

AMPHITRYONIADES qua tempestate iuuenicos

egerat a stabulis, o Erythea, tuis,

uenit ad inuictos, pecorosa Palatia, montes

The son of Amphitryon, what time he had driven the oxen from your stalls, Erythea, came to the unconquerable mountains

23 This global setting provides a grand stage for the metapoetic drama to be played out within 4.9 in the intrusion of epic masculinity on the domain of female elegy.<sup>xlix</sup> The geographical transition from west to east thus anticipates Propertius' transition from epic to elegiac narrative : Hercules' defeat of Cacus, narrated in Evander's epyllion at *Aen.* 8.190-275, is now compressed into a mere seven elegiac couplets (4.9.7-20), thereby making way for a Propertian sequel in which the epic hero becomes an elegiac-style *exclusus amator* (4.9.31-6) :<sup>l</sup>

huc ruit in siccam congesta puluere barbam,

et iacit *ante fores* uerba minora deo :

'uos precor, o luci sacro quae luditis antro,

pandite defessis hospita fana uiris.

fontis egens erro circum antra sonantia lymphis,

et caua suscepto flumine palma sat est.

Here he rushed, having heaped dust into his dry beard, and before the door he utters words not worthy of a god : 'I pray to you who play in the sacred bower of the grove : open the temple hospitably to men who are exhausted. In need of a fountain I wander around glades sounding with water — and a hollow palm with water cupped in it is enough.

24 Hercules now stands *ante fores* (a catchphrase of the *paraclausithyron* scenario) begging to be admitted to the female-only shrine of the Bona Dea so that he may quench his thirst



(and perhaps his lust).<sup>ii</sup> Although translated to a distinctly elegiac scenario, the culture-hero nevertheless retains traces of his Virgilian provenance. Hercules' prayerful request for a palmful of water recalls the ritual act of Aeneas at the very moment of his immigration via the Tiber (*Aen.* 8.69-70) :

*cauis undam de flumine palmis  
sustinet ac talis effundit ad aethera uoces*  
[Aeneas] uplifts water from the stream in his hollow palms as use ordains, and pours forth to  
Heaven this prayer

- 25 Propertius' Hercules might initially be thought to be 'repeating' here, in an elegiac context, the far more solemn action of Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8. In narrative chronology, however, it must be Aeneas who is doing the repetition : in an act of literary one-upmanship, Virgil's hero is made to repeat the rather less than heroic behaviour of his typological precursor as found in the Propertian poem. On an initial impression, then, the elegiac destination that awaits Hercules' passage from west to east inverts the epic destiny that awaits his analogue's inverse passage from east to west. At a more playful level, however, 4.9 exploits the chronological texture of the *Aeneid* to expose (or impose) a more elegiac reading of Virgil : Hercules' elegiac emasculation, for example, may find affinity in the effeminacy imputed to Aeneas by his Italian opponents. Constructing for himself a suitably elegiac and feminine demeanour, Propertius' Hercules cites his former enslavement to the Lydian queen Omphale (47-50) :

*idem ego Sidonia feci seruilia palla  
officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo ;  
mollis et hirsutum cinxit mihi fascia pectus,  
et manibus duris apta puella fui.*

I have also done the tasks of a slave-girl in a Sidonian gown and worked at the daily burden of the Lydian distaff. A soft breastband has surrounded my shaggy chest, and with my hard hands I was a fitting girl.

- 26 However comical Hercules' transvestism may be, when read through an 'orientalist' lens, his presence in the Roman Occident, reliving his 'oriental' adventures, becomes a meaningful analogy for the story of the *Aeneid*, at least as read by Propertius. Such a reading of Hercules' *seruitium* in an oriental dress (*Sidonia...palla*) would find support within the *Aeneid* in, for example, Iarbas' characterisation (*Aen.* 4.215-7) of his rival for Dido's affections (cf. *Sidonia Dido*, *Aen.* 1.446). As a politician as well as a lover, Iarbas' rhetoric gives an indication of the role played by orientalism in propagandistic discourse.
- 27 Just as orientalism is an intensively politicised discourse, many readers of these texts have found themselves confronted by political allegory and the 'toils of historicism'.<sup>iii</sup> Such possibilities can be considered within the parameters of intertextuality broadly defined. Political intertexts will rise to the surface in 4.9 all the more promptly for any reader who had extracted political significance from (or imposed it upon) the duel of Hercules and Cacus in the corresponding passage of *Aeneid* 8, where Hercules' triumph over evil, however untidy, in some measure anticipates the culture-heroism within the epic of Aeneas and, beyond the epic, of Augustus.<sup>iiii</sup> In so doing, such a reader becomes entangled in a post-Actian reorganisation of allegorical appropriations, since it was Marc Antony (rather than Augustus) who had laid claim to Herculean intertextuality by virtue of familial descent.<sup>lv</sup> Paul Zanker has argued that the anti-Antonian faction was quick to capitalise on such associations, in this case by associating Hercules and Omphale with Antony and Cleopatra :<sup>lv</sup> iconographically, such an identification may have been implied in mass-produced Arretine ware, and more generally it would have been one among many associations potentially available to viewers of Augustan and Julio-Claudian images of Omphale such as have been excavated in abundance around the Bay of Naples (even if in themselves these are merely a symptom of Rome's contact with the East).<sup>lvi</sup> Such an interpretation of Propertius 4.9 is encouraged by elegy 3.11 where, in a catalogue that culminates with Cleopatra, the myth of Hercules and Omphale provides one of several parallels for the poet's elegiac subservience (3.11.17-20) :

Omphale<sup>lvii</sup> in tantum formae processit honorem  
 Lydia Gygaeo tincta puella lacu  
 ut qui pacato statuisset in orbe columnas  
 tam dura traheret mollia pensa manu.

Omphale, the Lydian girl who had bathed in Gyges' pool, advanced to such distinction of beauty that the man who had set up columns to mark the world he had pacified plied soft weights [*i.e.* of wool] with his hand so hard.

- 28 The accounts of Hercules' servitude in the east here in 3.11 and later in 4.9 are expressed similarly (as underlined) but differently allegorised : in the former, Hercules finds his literary and historical counterparts in Propertius and Antony respectively, whereas in the latter they are located in Aeneas and, for some Virgilian readers, Augustus. Any reactivation of Hercules' Antonian associations in the context of Propertius' elegiac sequel to the duel of Hercules and Cacus will consequently problematise a straightforward reading of Virgilian allegory in *Aeneid* 8. It may signal his recent re-appropriation by Augustus (and Virgil) that Hercules in Propertius 4.9 merely reminisces about his former enslavement in the Orient, and is decidedly not cross-dressing in the present (*i.e.* Hercules is no longer an Antonian heroine), yet his ensuing desecration of the Bona Dea shrine will impose a limit on any such sanitisation.
- 29 There is, however, no need to be determinative with this, or any, intertext. Other readers of Propertius 4.9 have detected in the recollection of Hercules' transvestism at the Bona Dea shrine a countervailing reminiscence of Clodius' alleged desecration of the same cult in 62 BC.<sup>lviii</sup> It might be seen as a function of orientalist discourse that Antony, Clodius, Hercules, and Propertius should be constructed in like manner. In an important contribution to the literature-versus-life debate, Jasper Griffin argued that Propertius and Antony engaged in a mutually reinforcing self-presentation as elegiac hedonists.<sup>lix</sup> Orientalism would ascribe less autonomy to its protagonists, such that the Propertian love-affair and the historical record of Antony are each products of, as well as participants in, orientalist discourse. It could be argued, further, that the strength of this discourse continues to manifest in representations of Antony and Cleopatra to this day.<sup>lx</sup>

## Cleopatra (Propertius 4.6)

- 30 Given the structural similarities between the elegiac love-affair and accounts of Cleopatra's interaction with Rome, it is hardly surprising that the celebration of the oriental queen's downfall in Propertius 4.6 is followed by the news of the mistress' death in Propertius 4.7 : according to this sequence, the end of Cynthia's *regnum* (4.7.50) corresponds to the end of Cleopatra's (cf. 4.6.58). A degree of tension here is inescapable since, as Alison Keith has argued, it was Roman militarism in the east which funded elegiac *nequitia* at Rome.<sup>lxi</sup> Thus, if Actium kills Cynthia in 4.7, it also makes possible her resurrection in 4.8. Propertius 4.6 is therefore honest in its closing admission that the *otium* of poetic activity is predicated on Actium (69-78) ; in the elegy's opening declaration of oriental intertexts (1-8), the Phrygian origins of the genre are invoked in an act of homage to occidental supremacy (*tibia Mygdoniis libet eburna cadis*, 'let the ivory pipe libate a song from Phrygian jars', 8).
- 31 The lines which fall within this frame have been described in terms of their extreme masculinity :<sup>lxii</sup> the assertion that 'Rome conquers through the good faith of Apollo ; the woman pays the penalty' (*uincit Roma fide Phoebi ; dat femina poenas*, 57) is the culmination of a reductivism in which Actium is progressively reformulated as a kind of 'battle of the sexes' (19-24) :<sup>lxiii</sup>

huc mundi coiere manus; stetit aequore moles  
 pinea; nec remis aequa fauebat auis:  
 altera classis erat Teucro damnata Quirino  
 pilaque femineae turpiter apta manu;  
 hinc Augusta ratis, plenis Iouis omine uelis,  
 signaque iam patriae uincere docta suae.

Here met the forces of the world ; a pine mass stood in the sea ; but no equal omen favoured the oars. One fleet was doomed by Trojan Quirinus, and its legionary javelins were shamefully fitted into a female hand ; on the other side the August ship, its sails filled by Jupiter's favour, and standards already taught to conquer for their own country.

- 32 In Teucric Quirinus, Rome's Phrygian heritage has been sanitised and assimilated to the *patria* to the point that it can now oppose itself to Rome's eastern foes, here embodied in a single woman. This reductiveness takes its lead from the depiction of Actium in the ecphrasis of Aeneas' shield (*Aen.* 8.675-728)<sup>lxiv</sup> where, as David Quint has shown, Virgil brings into confrontation a series of binary opposites (one v. many ; male v. female ; control v. loss of control ; order v. chaos ; Olympians v. monsters ; permanence v. flux) under the banner of West versus East.<sup>lxv</sup>
- 33 Transposed from the centre of the Shield of Aeneas to the centre of Propertius 4, the historical Cleopatra takes on the aspect of the disruptive elegiac *domina*, as in 3.11, only now in retreat. Just as Horos predicted that *una puella* (Cynthia) will frustrate Propertius' *uictrices ... palmas* (4.1.140, above), so Propertius describes the *mulier una* (Cleopatra) who eluded the emperor's triumph (4.6.63-66) :

*illa* petit *Nilum* cumba male nixa fugaci  
*occultum*, iusso non *moritura* die.  
 di melius ! quantus *mulier* foret *una* triumphus,  
 ductus erat per quas ante Jugurtha uias !

Unpropitiously reliant on a fleeing cutter, she makes for the Nile, hidden river, with no intention of dying on a demanded day. Thank heaven ! What a triumph a single woman would have been in the streets through which Jugurtha was led in the past !

- 34 As well as consolidating the implicit connection between Cleopatra and the elegiac mistress, these lines also more immediately recall the depiction of Cleopatra's flight to the Nile on Aeneas' shield (*Aen.* 8.709-13) :

*illam* inter caedes pallentem *morte futura*  
 fecerat ignipotens undis et Iapyge ferri,  
 contra autem magno maerentem corpore *Nilum*  
 pandentemque sinus et tota ueste uocantem  
 caeruleum in gremium *latebrosa*que flumina uictos.

Amid the carnage, the Lord of Fire had fashioned her pale at the coming of death, borne on the waves and the wind of Iapyx ; while over against her was the mourning Nile, of massive body, opening wide his folds and with all his raiment welcoming the vanquished to his azure lap and sheltering streams.

- 35 What is striking about this more obvious connection is that it pinpoints the precise moment at which Virgil's Cleopatra herself looks back to an elegiac and oriental queen within the *Aeneid* : fleeing to the Nile *pallentem morte futura* (709), Cleopatra cannot but evoke Dido, *pallida morte futura* (4.644) in the denouement of her tragedy four books earlier.<sup>lxvi</sup> By means of this intratextual echo, Virgil retroactively confirms the historical echo of Antony and Cleopatra in the affair of Dido and Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4. Propertius, at any rate, would appear to have read Virgil in this way : in the context of the similarity in 63-4 to Cleopatra's getaway on Aeneas' shield,<sup>lxvii</sup> the future participle *moritura* does more than condense the phrase by which the Virgilian Cleopatra recalls her Sidonian analogue, for *moritura* is itself expressly applied to Dido four times in *Aeneid* 4 (308, 415, 519, 604). Propertius, therefore, advertises his awareness of the intratextual connection with Dido's death in the demise of Cleopatra in *Aeneid* 8 by applying to his own moribund Cleopatra a different future participle, but one which nonetheless directly connotes Dido. The connection is of particular interest to Propertius, given Dido's construction as an elegiac lover.<sup>lxviii</sup>
- 36 Propertius' reading of the *Aeneid* for its oriental, feminine, and elegiac elements thus extends to the epic's exploration of the assertion of western male dominance, the art of *imperium sine fine*, through the demise of its female protagonists.<sup>lxix</sup> As Keith has argued in her analysis

of women in Latin epic, the reassertion of Roman order through Cleopatra's annihilation is prefigured in the *Aeneid*'s sequence of female deaths: "Just as Aeneas inaugurates his imperial mission over his wife's ghost (2.272-95) and reaffirms his devotion to the project over the entreaties of the dying Dido (4.345-50; cf. 6.460-4), so Vulcan depicts Augustus, Aeneas' descendant on the shield, restoring order to the Roman world with the defeat and death of Cleopatra."<sup>lxx</sup> Whether read 'pessimistically' or otherwise,<sup>lxxi</sup> this apparent misogyny is no less a feature of Propertius 4 which, like the *Aeneid* and other Augustan texts, makes of the female corpse a *locus* for the interrogation, if not valorisation, of occidental hegemony.<sup>lxxii</sup>

## Excursus : [Helen] (Propertius 4.6)

- 37 In the context of a poetry book which presents a sequence of women who are either dead or moribund, and of a poem which reduces the Battle of Actium to a 'battle of the sexes', it can be seen as an expression or strategy of patriarchal and orientalist discourse that the Propertian narrator pours scorn on the notion of being worsted by an oriental woman (4.6.45-6), asserts that Rome wins and the female pays (57), and recuperates her escape by questioning the glory to be derived from subjecting a single woman to a Roman triumph (65).<sup>lxxiii</sup>
- 38 In the *Aeneid*, similar thoughts are articulated in the so-called 'Helen Episode', a passage of twenty-two lines transmitted by none of the principal Virgilian manuscripts and attested by no ancient authority other than Servius,<sup>lxxiv</sup> who alleges (ad *Aen.* 2.592) that the lines were expunged from the *Aeneid* by Virgil's literary executors on account of their inappropriateness to Aeneas' *uirtus* and inconsistency with Helen's whereabouts as later reported (*Aen.* 6.511-29).<sup>lxxv</sup> Whatever the authenticity of the lines, it is interesting to note that, like the narrator of Propertius 4.6, Aeneas abhors the prospect of being worsted by an eastern queen, sees the vindication of the fatherland in her punishment, and concedes that punishing women confers no lasting glory (*Aen.* 2.571-87) :

illa sibi infestos euersa ob Pergama Teucros  
et Danaum poenam et deserti coniugis iras  
praemetuens, Troiae et patriae communis Erinys,  
abdiderat sese atque aris inuisa sedebat.  
exarsere ignes animo; subit ira cadentem 575  
ulcisci patriam et sceleratas sumere poenas.  
'scilicet haec Spartam incolumis patriasque Mycenae  
aspiciet, partoque ibit regina triumpho ?  
coniugiumque domumque patris natosque uidebit  
Iliadum turba et Phrygiis comitata ministris ? 580  
occiderit ferro Priamus ? Troia arserit igni ?  
Dardanium totiens sudarit sanguine litus ?  
non ita. namque etsi nullum memorabile nomen  
**feminea in poena** est, habet haec uictoria laudem ;  
extinxisse nefas tamen et sumpsisse merentis 585  
laudabor poenas, animumque explesse iuuabit  
ultrixis †famam et cineres satiasset meorum.'

She, fearing the Trojans' anger against her for the overthrow of Pergamum, the vengeance of the Greeks, and the wrath of the husband she abandoned - she, the undoing alike of her motherland and ours - had hidden herself and was crouching, hateful creature, by the altars. Fire blazed up in my heart; there comes an angry desire to avenge my ruined country and exact a penalty for her sin. 'So is she to look unscathed on Sparta and her native Mycenae, and parade a queen in the triumph she has won? Is she to see husband and home, parents and children, attended by a train of Ilian ladies and Phrygian captives? For this is Priam to have perished by the sword? Troy burnt in flames? The Dardan shore so often soaked in blood? Not so! For though there is no glorious renown in punishing a woman and such victory gains no honour, yet I shall win praise for blotting out villainy and exacting just recompense; and it will be a joy to have filled my soul with the flame of revenge [reading *ultrixis flammae*] and satisfied the ashes of my people.'

- 39 Ideologically, this outburst and the Propertian narrator's misogyny are on the same page. Contemplating Troy's humiliation in Helen's triumph (*partoque ibit regina triumpho*), Aeneas' impulse to take revenge quickly overrides his reflection that there is no glory in

punishing a woman (*feminea in poena*). The Propertian narrator similarly concedes that Cleopatra's appearance in a Roman triumph would have made for a shallow spectacle (*quantus mulier foret una triumphus*), but conversely the female in this case is punished (*dat femina poenas*), now by Aeneas' typological and familial successor (*Auguste, Hectoreis cognite maior auis*, 'Augustus, recognized as greater than Hector and your ancestors', 4.6.38). Intertextually, Augustus' punishment of Cleopatra thus inverts the infamous case of Helen's crime and impunity (on which the elegist had previously remarked : cf. 2.1.50 and 2.32.31-2). Female punishment may not be an uncommon theme in Augustan literature, but the words *femina/femineus* and *poena* are rarely found in such close combination.<sup>lxxvi</sup> A contrasting absence of marked lexical sharing between the Helen Episode and Horace's accounts of Cleopatra's demise (*Epode* 9 and *Ode* 1.37) throws the Propertian correspondences into yet sharper relief.<sup>lxxvii</sup> Lexically as well as thematically, therefore, Propertius 4.6 strikes a chord with what is conspicuously (some would say suspiciously)<sup>lxxviii</sup> Aeneas' only soliloquy in his two-book after-dinner narrative of the sack of Troy and the subsequent wanderings of his people.

40 A parallel for the possible intertextual connection of Propertius 4.6 and the Helen Episode can be found in Lucan's description of Cleopatra (*De Bello Ciuili* 10.55-67) which (as underlined) also recalls the Helen Episode<sup>lxxix</sup> and is generally agreed to establish for it a *terminus post quem* of 65 BC (unless, as has been argued,<sup>lxxx</sup> Lucan was also a 'source text' for the Helen Episode) :<sup>lxxxi</sup>

obside quo pacis Pellaea tutus in aula    55  
 Caesar erat, cum se parua Cleopatra biremi  
 corrupto custode Phari laxare catenas  
 intulit Emathiis ignaro Caesare tectis,  
 dedecus Aegypti, Latii feralis Erinys,  
 Romano non casta malo. quantum inpulit Argos 60  
 Iliacasque domos facie Spartana nocenti,  
 Hesperios auxit tantum Cleopatra furores.  
 terruit illa suo, si fas, Capitolia sistro  
 et Romana petit inbelli signa Canopo  
 Caesare captiuo Pharios ductura triumphos ; 65  
 Leucadioque fuit dubius sub gurgite casus,  
 an mundum ne nostra quidem matrona teneret.

With him [Ptolemy] as hostage, Caesar was secure | in the Pellaeian court, when Cleopatra bribed the guard | to undo the chains of Pharos, and in a little two-oared boat | she entered the Emathian halls without Caesar's knowledge - | the disgrace of Egypt, deadly Erinys of Latium, | promiscuous to the harm of Rome. As much as the Spartan woman | with her harmful beauty knocked down Argos and the homes of Ilium, | so Cleopatra swelled the madness of Hesperia. | With her rattle she alarmed the Capitol, if such a thing can be, | and she attacked the Roman standards with unwarlike Canopus, | in her intent to lead a Pharian triumph with Caesar as a captive ; | and doubtful was the outcome on the Leucadian flood : | would a woman – not even Roman – rule the world ?

41 Thus, both Lucan and Propertius describe Cleopatra in terms of Virgil's Helen. By the reciprocity of intertextuality, such a reading of the *Aeneid* will, however anachronistically, invest Virgil's Helen with traces of the literary Cleopatras of Lucan and Propertius, thereby exposing (or imposing) an historical allusion in this section of the *Aeneid*.<sup>lxxxii</sup> The association of two oriental queens whose politico-erotic intrigues sparked war between east and west (cf. Lucan 10.60-62) might further be encouraged should Aeneas' contemplation of his people's subjugation in Helen's triumph (*Aen.* 2.578-80) recall the scaremongering rumours peddled about Cleopatra's ambitions.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> At least one critic has found it "hardly conceivable" that Virgil could have cast Helen in the role of victorious general.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Rather than pointing to the non-Virgilian authorship of the Helen Episode, however, this moment of perplexity might be the very point at which the surface of the text begins to shimmer over its allegorical depths. Those depths come more clearly into view when Helen is described in terms consistent with how Cleopatra is handled in Augustan poetry : as Maria Wyke has observed in her discussion of the Augustan Cleopatras, "[n]o name or title is used to identify her. She is once called

'the Egyptian wife' (*Aegyptia coniunx*), but more frequently is entitled only 'queen' (*regina*) or 'woman' (*femina, mulier, illa*).<sup>lxxxv</sup> So too, after an initial patronymic (*Tyndarida*, 569), Virgil's unmentionable Helen is denoted as *illa* (571), a fury (*Erinys*, 573), *haec* (577), *regina* (578), and *nefas* (585).<sup>lxxxvi</sup> It may be instructive, retroactively, that the last byword in this catalogue, *nefas*, is applied explicitly to Cleopatra on the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.688)<sup>lxxxvii</sup> where it is indicative of the reticence shared by the Augustan poets when it comes to naming her. With a virtual *damnatio memoriae* imposed on Cleopatra's name by Virgil and his contemporaries, Aeneas' *nullum memorabile nomen | feminea in poena* (*Aen.* 2.583-4) packs an ironical punch.

42 The susceptibility of Virgil's Helen to allegorical interpretation as the historical Cleopatra may become especially acute for any reader who had already read in the immediately preceding scene of Priam's decapitation an historical allusion to the decapitation of Pompey (a crime from which Cleopatra indirectly benefitted : cf. Lucan 10.100-103). Servius was one such reader (ad *Aen.* 2.557 : *Pompei tangit historiam*) ;<sup>lxxxviii</sup> so too, once more, was Lucan, whose prophecy of Pompey's decapitation at *Bellum Ciuile* 1.685-6 alludes back to, and thereby de-allegorizes (or 'rehistoricizes') Virgil's Priam.<sup>lxxxix</sup> With this in view, Lucan's ensuing description of Cleopatra in terms of Virgil's Helen seems to recognise in *Aeneid* 2 an allegorical sequence on Romano-Egyptian themes introduced in the death of Priam and developed in the ensuing near-death of Helen. When Lucan's entire narrative of Pompey's flight from Italy to the east is read as a sustained inversion of Aeneas' flight west to Rome,<sup>xc</sup> these become but two points on a wider allegorical continuum.<sup>xci</sup>

43 In recontextualising the Helen Episode within a poem about Augustus' defeat of Cleopatra at Actium, Propertius 4.6 becomes a kind of interpretative commentary on Virgilian allegorical technique : comparing the two texts, the reader finds that the punishment of Helen's analogue by Aeneas' successor in Propertius 4.6 inverts either triumphantly or darkly the escape of Cleopatra's analogue from Augustus' ancestor in *Aeneid* 2. De-allegorized in this way, the Helen Episode becomes imbued with a further level of irony in that it is narrated by Aeneas to another eastern queen who herself is taking on ever stronger affinities with Cleopatra.<sup>xcii</sup> This may lend further significance to the observation above that Propertius' Cleopatra recalls her Virgilian counterpart at precisely the moment where the latter recalls Dido.

44 In this way, Propertius 4.6 recognises and responds to Virgil's double-allegorization of Cleopatra in the figures of Helen and Dido. With this understood, the Helen Episode, when narrated to Dido, becomes an inset allegory in which the narrative of the eastern queen (Helen) who abandons her husband and is almost killed by Aeneas is, in the very moment of its telling, in the process of being reversed in the framing narrative, in which an eastern queen (Dido) is abandoned by the man she calls her husband (*Aen.* 4.172) and on whose sword she will kill herself.<sup>xciii</sup> When decoded by Propertius and Lucan, and by Virgil himself in *Aeneid* 8, this narrative finds further variation in the *Liebestod* of Cleopatra at Actium, where Aeneas' typological and familial successor emerges as no more or less responsible for the death of Cleopatra than is Aeneas for the death of Dido. The same ambivalence radiates outwards from post-Actian Propertian elegy with the death of Cynthia in elegy 4.7 followed by her resurrection in 4.8. Readers may or may not be amenable to the implication that Augustus, like Aeneas, did not balk at the thought of killing a woman, just as they may or may not heed the protestations of Cynthia (allegedly poisoned by a Numidian slave : 4.7.37) when she accuses Propertius of complicity in her demise (4.7.47-8) with more than a faint echo of Dido's laments.<sup>xciv</sup>

45 Those who believe the Helen Episode to be authentic<sup>xcv</sup> will find in Propertius 4.6 the possibility of a contemporary allusion. Within a discourse of accepted 'truths' about oriental and female inferiority, however, the fact that Aeneas and the Propertian narrator have a similar outlook will not on its own authenticate the Helen Episode. For those who believe the Helen Episode to be an interpolation,<sup>xcvi</sup> therefore, its similarities to Propertius 4.6 can be ascribed to the cultural dominance of gendered and orientalist discourse. Whether authentic or not, the quality of the Helen Episode, as it stands, lies less in its rhetoric, language, and prosody (as

Virgil's hero loses control, so too, perhaps, does Aeneas' author) than in its manipulation of literary and political intertexts within its own narrative framework.

## Afterword

46 It has been suggested above that Propertius reads the *Aeneid* in an elegiac, or Propertian (that is not to say anti-Augustan) way. Starting with Elegy 4.1, Propertius exposes the tensions in the foundation myth, where the Orient floods into native Italy, be that in the form of Phrygian effeminacy, Aeneas' *furor*, or the intertextual orientalism of the Augustan poets. It is important to remember that elegiac exoticism is itself always already imported through imperialist appropriation, and that Propertius is offering this elegiac and oriental reading of the *Aeneid* within an elegiac framework that, in Book 4, has become more openly occidental than Propertian elegy was formerly prepared to be. Indeed, the journey from east to west made by Phrygian Aeneas offers a further parallel for the journey made by Propertian elegy from oriental and emasculating *Cynthia prima* to western and superlative *maxima Roma*. In this way, Propertius rewrites the foundation story of Virgil's *Aeneid* as another 'staging' of the generic influx underway from the beginning of Book 4. Propertius rewrites Virgilian legend as a clash between epic and elegy, a story of generic as well as ethnographic immigration, now renewed or continued in the importation into Latin poetry of Greek models. This importation is enabled by Roman conquest, and the conquest is legitimised by orientalist discourse. Thus, as Alessandro Barchiesi has written, there is a kind of "circulation within the text between political and literary intertexts",<sup>xvii</sup> a circulation into which the reader, too, is pulled by the invitation to interpret. In this interpretation we must recognise our own complicity with these texts : in reading an exotic literature that itself has determined what can be deemed exotic, we may be forced to conclude that it has been a strategy of the text to make orientalists of us.

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## Notes

i Said 1978: 12.

ii On the historical origins of elegy, see West 1974: 1-21 and Bowie 1986. On ancient views of Homer's provenance, see Graziosi 2002.

- iii On the absence of barbarian stereotyping in Homer, see Hall 1989: 19-47; Erskine 2001: 51-7. On the barbarization of the Trojans, see Erskine 2001: 8-9 (in modern scholarship) and 61-92 (in Athens after the Persian Wars). On the *Iliad* as "the father of fifth-century Greek historiography", see Dench 2005: 55-6.
- iv Uniquely, at *Il.* 2.867 the Carians are described as *barbarophónoi*, but the adjective here seems to be used in a technical rather than pejorative sense of those whose language was not Greek (cf. *Il.* 2.804); see Cartledge 1993: 13 and 37-8; Erskine 2001: 52; Dench 2005: 305-6.
- v On this passage, see Graziosi 2002: 197, and Erskine 2001: 51-2.
- vi Quint 1993: 8. See further Syed 2005.
- vii Virgil is quoted from the text of Mynors 1969; the translation is by Fairclough (rev. Goold) 1999 and 2000.
- viii In Aeneas' mouth the adjective is perhaps more ironic than Austin 1964: ad loc. allows; see the excellent note of Horsfall 2008: ad loc. On *Aen.* 8.685, see Fordyce 1977. On the association and estrangement of Roman imperialism and Homeric epic in Ennius' *Annales*, see the nuanced remarks of Dench 2005: 57-6.
- ix Griffin 1977.
- x On Hellenism in Propertian language, see Maltby 1999; Coleman 1999; Deschamps 1980. For some reflections, see Keith 2008: 139-65, esp. 155-6 and 158 ("Propertian elegy ... participates in its very linguistic texture in the Roman imperial project that it characteristically elides in its narrative").
- xi See Kennedy 1993: 35-7 on the reader's situatedness as the determining factor in political interpretation.
- xii For a full exploration of this tension, see Keith 2008: 139-65 (with p. 146 on the name of the elegiac mistress).
- xiii On the gender of epic, see Keith 2000 and Hinds 2000.
- xiv On the gender of elegy, see Wyke 2002: 155-91.
- xv See, however, Said 1978: 5-6, 20-1, 54, 55-7.
- xvi On the link between representations of cultural and sexual difference, see Yegenoglu 1998. Female interventions in orientalist art and literature are studied by Lewis 1996.
- xvii For these characteristics, see Kennedy 1993: 31-2.
- xviii On the generic dynamics of Propertius 4, see especially DeBrohun 2003.
- xix See Cairns 1986.
- xx Text (unless otherwise stated): Heyworth 2007; translation: Heyworth 2007a.
- xxi On the date of Propertius 4, see Hutchinson 2006: 2-3. On the interplay of elegiac and epic interests at 4.1.1, see O'Rourke 2010.
- xxii Hutchinson 2006: ad loc.; see also Van Sickle 1974-75: 125 and 130.
- xxiii On the geographical, mythological and historical causes of enmity between Asia and Europe in the *Alexandra*, see Amioti 2000. On myth in Lycophron (and Apuleian ceramics) as a mediator of east-west relations in Italy, see Pouzadoux (and Prioux) 2009 (451-67 on Lycophron). See also the remarks of Momigliano 1942: 61: "Lycophron accepted the Herodotean philosophy of the contrast between Asia and Europe and included in his scheme the new great power of the West as a representative of Asia. It is the first real attempt known to us to introduce Rome into a design of universal history".
- xxiv The date of the Roman sections of the *Alexandra* (on which see West 1984) is less at issue when considering Lycophron as received in Augustan poetry (see, however, Horsfall 2005 for the hypothesis that [some of] the Roman lines are post-Virgilian): see West 1983: 132-5 and Gigante Lanzara 1999 (Lycophron in the *Aeneid*); Klein 2009 (Lycophron in Propertius, Virgil, and Ovid).
- xxv For the allusion to Lycophron at 4.1.51-4 and 87-8, see esp. Klein 2009: 564-6. On the former, see also, e.g., Rothstein 1920: ad loc.; Marr 1970: 161-2. For these and other parallels, see now Hutchinson 2006: ad loc.
- xxvi Whether 4.1a and 4.1b are a continuous elegy or contiguous elegies, Horos' speech may still be taken as a response to what precedes: see now Heyworth 2007a: 424-5. On Horos as representative of the other pole of the book, see e.g. Suerbaum 1964: 360-1; Conte 1994: 123; Wyke 2002: 81-2; DeBrohun 2003: 13-22, 73-82, 112-3.
- xxvii Following the *textus receptus*; for *longa sepulchra*, Heyworth 2007 prints *candida regna* (see subsequent notes).
- xxviii The Lycophronian 'prediction' is less controversial insofar as the formula 'on land and sea' is conventional: see Momigliano 1942.
- xxix So now Heyworth 2007a: 421 (who adds that *dicam* reproduces the opening Λέξω of the *Alexandra* and is paralleled at *Aen.* 6.722 where Anchises begins his cosmic and imperialist prophecy), following Murgia 1989 (who also argues that *Fasti* 1.523-6 parallels the sequence 4.1.87-8, 53-4: however, it

cannot be excluded that Ovid unites Propertius' prophecy with Horos' counter-prophecy for the same reasons that compel editors to transpose) and Marr 1970: 162-3 (who argues that the transposition adds Propertius' prophecy to those of the Sibyl and Cassandra: however, as a *post eventum* prophecy it is also in keeping with Horos' charlatanries).

xxx Heyworth 2007a: 421 notes that *longa sepulchra* "does not fit the optimistic tone" and therefore recommends emendation as well as transposition; Klein 2009: 565 with nn.11 and 13 notes the closeness of the conjecture *regna superba* (Housman) to *Alex.* 1229 but of the *textus receptus* to *Alex.* 366 (τὸν κενὸν τάφον).

xxxi On Horos' adversarial response to the themes of 4.1a, see DeBrohun 2003: 75-9 at 76: "any sense of Greek victory is downplayed; instead, emphasis is placed on the negative aftermath of the Greek venture."

xxxii Hutchinson 2006: ad loc.: "Umbria is made to sound strange and perhaps unattractive ... The historical connotations of Mevania are also pertinent: there Rome defeated an Umbrian and Etruscan uprising (308 BC, Livy 9.41.8-20)."

xxxiii On the Callimachean allusion, see now Miller 2009: 321-2.

xxxiv On the 'counter-cultural' posture of Propertian elegy, see Hallett 1973.

xxxv I am grateful to Dr Catherine Ware for drawing my attention to this similarity.

xxxvi On the collapse of aetiological and erotic categories in Propertius 4, see e.g. Wyke 2002: 83 ("cross-references and overlaps abound"); DeBrohun 2003, esp 22-4; Hutchinson 2006: 2.

xxxvii See Horsfall 1971; Hardie 1994: 188-98; Keith 2000: 19-22; Erskine 2001: 258.

xxxviii On *arma uirumque* as epic tag and *incipit*/title of the *Aeneid*, see Barchiesi 1997: 16-17.

xxxix Thomas 1982: 99.

xl Gruen 2007 and 2011: 243-9. See also Edwards 2003. More pessimistically, see Isaac 2004 and Sherwin-White 1967. For the sources, see Balsdon 1979.

xli O'Hara 1994 and 2007: 96-8. See also Zetzel 1997: 188-92.

xliv Dench 2005 (esp. 102-3 and 212-4 on the *Aeneid*).

xliii Rothwell 1996; Weeber 1978. For the intervention of Tibullus 2.5, see Maltby 2002.

xliv On the provenance and effect of the theatre, see Edwards 1993: 98-136.

xlvi Hutchinson 1996: ad loc.

xlvi On the Trojan and non-Trojan aspects to the Roman reception of the Magna Mater, see Erskine 2001: 205-18.

xlvi See, respectively, Knauer 1964; Nelis 2001; George 1974.

xlvi See Hardie 1998: 41 (on the *Georgics*), 57 (on the *Aeneid*) and 71 (on *Aen.* 6.847-53, whence the quotation).

xlix DeBrohun 2003: 135-40, 157-65. For a gendered more than generic reading of Propertius 4.9, see Lindheim 1998; with a Lacanian slant, see Janan 2001: 128-45.

l On elegy's rivalry with Virgilian epic in Propertius 4.9, see Warden 1982.

li On the elegiac template behind this section of Propertius 4.9, see originally Anderson 1964.

lii From the title of Fox 1999.

liii For the importance of Prop. 4.9 in this regard, see Spencer 2001: 262-3; see also Fox 1996: 169-75 and 1999; Harrison 2004; Welch 2005: 112-32. On Hercules and Augustus in *Aen.* 8, see Galinsky 1966 and 1972: 141-6; Camps 1969: 98-100; Binder 1971; Gransden 1976: 14-20.

liv Cf. Appian BC 3.16, 19 and Plutarch, *Ant.* 4.1-2, 36.4 and 60.3 with Pelling 1988: 124. For the Augustan reappropriation, see Galinsky 1972: 141.

lv Zanker 1988: 57-60. See also Kampen 1996.

lvi See *LIMC* VII.1: 45-53 with VII.2: 30-43.

lvii Mistrusting *Omphale*, which requires correction (rare in Augustan elegy), Heyworth prints *quin etiam* (Heinsius): see Heyworth 2007a: 332. If *Omphale* is a redundant gloss, the identification is nonetheless correct.

lviii Welch 2005: 117-20; Fox 1999: 165-7.

lix Griffin 1977.

lx Wyke 2002: 195-320.

lxi Keith 2008: 139-65 (164-5 on 4.6).

lxii Janan 2001: 102 ("unquestioning nationalistic 'masculinism'"); Hutchinson 2006: 154 ("a very male poem"); on the elegy's consolidation of male homosocial networks, see Keith 2008, 136-7.

lxiii Gurval 1995: 227; DeBrohun 2003: 218.

lxiv On Virgilian allusion in 4.6, see Caston 2003, Hubbard 1974: 134-6, and Williams 1968: 51-7.

lxv See especially the analytical table at Quint 1993: 25.

lxvi See Quint 1993: 28-9; Putnam 1998: 148; Keith 2000: 119.

lxvii Pace Hutchinson 2006 ad loc., Virgil's description of the Nile's streams as *latebrosa* encourages Rossberg's emendation (accepted by Heyworth) of *hoc unum* to *occultum* (also of the Nile) at Prop. 4.6.64.

lxviii Cairns 1989: 129-50.

lxix On the 'erasure' of women and its implications in Virgil, see Perkell 1981; Nugent 1999; James 2002; Keith 2000. For this theme in Livy, see Joshel 1992 and Braund 2002: 20-36. For some related ideas in Propertius and Ovid, see Greene 1998.

lxx Keith 2000: 118.

lxxi For views of 4.6 as in some way consistent with an 'official' Augustan ideology, see Grimal 1952: 192-3; Paladini 1958; Pillinger 1969; Cairns 1984; Keith 2008: 164-5. On 4.6 as a pragmatic or reluctant concession to Augustan politics, see Sweet 1972; Hubbard 1974: 116-8; La Penna 1977: 88-9; Stahl 1985: 252-3, 259. On 4.6 as in some way resistant to an 'official' Augustan ideology, see Johnson 1973; Sullivan 1976: 146-7; Connor 1978; Mader 1990; Gurval 1995: 250, 267-8, 272-4; J.F. Miller 2004; Janan 2001: 100-104 (insofar as 4.6 is critiqued by 4.7); Welch 2005: 79-111. For some nuanced remarks on the "fluctuating responses elicited by the poem", see Hutchinson 2006: 154-5; on the ironic subject position that occasions "antinomies of interpretation" in 4.6, see P.A. Miller 2004: 203-9.

lxxii On the dead women of Propertius 4 and the "virtual absence of living female voices" in Roman poets generally, see Habinek 1998: 122-36; see also Dufallo 2007: 74-98. On Propertius 4 as in some way resistant to patriarchalism, see Janan 2001 (esp. 85-113 and 146-63 on its dead females); Wyke 2002: 78-114 (on the females of Propertius 4 providing counterpoint to the book's epic agenda) and 185-8 (on the sympathies/identity of Propertius 4 as more feminine than masculine); Hallett 1973 on 'counter-cultural feminism' in Propertius 4; Gold 2007.

lxxiii Cf. Dio's report (43.19.3-4) that the appearance of Cleopatra's sister Arsinoe in Julius Caesar's triumph of 46 BC had the unintended effect of eliciting sympathy rather than pride from the Roman spectators.

lxxiv See Goold 1970 (= 1990), esp. Table 4 (p. 164 = p. 123) for non-quotations of the Helen Episode in the ancient commentary/scholarly tradition (an absence already noted by a dissenting Nettleship in his revised edition of Conington's Virgil [Conington and Nettleship 1884 ad *Aen.* 2.567-88, p. 148]: "Not a line of it is quoted by a single grammarian"). Against the possibility of a "quotation" of the Helen Episode in a sequential depiction of scenes from the fall of Troy on a gladiator's helmet, see Van Buren 1920.

lxxv For responses to this narrative inconsistency that do not assume Virgil or his alleged interpolator to have nodded, see Bleisch 1999; Suzuki 1989: 94-102; Reckford 1981.

lxxvi Allowing for a maximum interval of nine words in a search of the LLT-A (accessed via <http://www.brepolis.net>), the words *femina* or *femineus* and *poena*, in any inflection(s), appear to be meaningfully connected in non-Christian Latin texts only at Ovid, *Ars* 1.339 (Phineus' *poena* stems from *feminea libido*), Valerius Maximus 6.3.9 (Egnatius Mecenas makes an example of his wife for drinking wine), Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.53.1 (repercussions for noblewomen who sleep with slaves), Suetonius, *Tib.* 35.2 (punishment for matrons of ill-repute).

lxxvii Nor will Aeneas' speech here in the second book of the *Aeneid* find itself echoed in the penultimate when Arruns acknowledges that no glory will accrue from killing Camilla (*Aen.* 11.785-93); for the parallel, see Conington (who attributes it to J. Henry) in Conington and Nettleship 1884 ad *Aen.* 2.583 (p. 150).

lxxviii So Heinze 1993: 27 (= 1928: 46-7). For Austin 1964: 223, by contrast, the soliloquy is 'strikingly dramatic'.

lxxix See Bruère 1964.

lxxx Murgia 2003.

lxxxi Text: Housman 1927; translation: Braund 1992.

lxxxii On the affinities between Helen and Cleopatra (also noted in Plutarch's *synkrisis* of Demetrius and Antony [3.4]), see Suzuki 1989: 258-64.

lxxxiii Cf. Dio 50.24.3-7; Hor. *Od.* 1.37.6-8, *Ep.* 9.11-16; Prop. 3.11.31-2 and 49; *Eleg. in Maecen.* 1.53-4; Manil. 1.917; Lucan 10.62-5; Prop. 4.6.65 might be added insofar as victor and vanquished are not identified without ambiguity.

lxxxiv Murgia 2003: 417.

lxxxv Wyke 2002: 205; cf. Nisbet and Hubbard 1970 on Hor. *Od.* 1.37.7. Some specific references: Cleopatra and/or [Helen] as *regina* (Hor. *Od.* 1.37.7; Prop. 3.11.39; cf. *Aen.* 2.578), *mulier* (Hor. *Od.* 1.37.32; Prop. 3.11.49, 4.6.65), and *femina* (Hor. *Ep.* 9.12; Prop. 3.11.30, 4.6.22, 57; cf. *Aen.* 2.584);

references to their emasculation of Romans (Hor. *Od.* 1.37.9-10; *Ep.* 9.11-14; Prop. 3.11.31-2, 4.6.45-6; cf. *Aen.* 2.580) and evasion of a triumph (Hor. *Od.* 1.37.31-2; Prop. 3.11.49-52, 4.6.63-6; cf. Hor. *Ep.* 9.21-6; cf. *Aen.* 2.578). Instructive, too, might be the description of Cleopatra as *fatalis Erinys* at Luc. *BC* 10.59 and *fatiale monstrum* at Hor. *Od.* 1.37.21.

lxxxvi Similarly, when Deiphobus' shade relates how Helen directed his murder (*Aen.* 6.511-530), he refers to her as *Lacaena* (511), *illa* (512, 517), *ipsa* (518), and *coniunx* (523), but never by name (as Donatus notes on this passage: *nec supra nomen eius propter odium nimium dixit neque hic eam nominavit, ut Helenam diceret, sed dixit illa, dixit Lacaenae*; cf. Norden 1926 ad *Aen.* 6.511 [p. 266]: 'Mit Namen nennt Deiphobus die Helena überhaupt nicht'; Fairclough/Goold 1999: 568: "[h]e disdains to name Helen"); moreover, the manner of her revelry (*illa, chorum simulans euhantis orgia circum | ducebat Phrygias*, 'she feigned a solemn dance and round the city led the Phrygian wives, shrieking in their Bacchic rites', 517-8) recalls the Dionysiac ritual in which Cleopatra was said to participate with Antony (cf. Plutarch, *Ant.* 24.3-4, 26, 33.6-34.1, 75.4-5 with Pelling 1988 ad locc.).

lxxxvii The use of *nefas* substantively of a person at *Aen.* 2.585, not quite unparalleled (see Austin 1961: 190 and 1964 ad loc.), may suggest an alternative interpretation of its counterpart at *Aen.* 8.688 (*pace* Austin 1961: 190), usually taken as an exclamatory parenthesis (so Eden 1975, Gransden 1976, and Fordyce 1977 ad loc.).

lxxxviii On Virgil's Priam as Pompey, see Bowie 1990.

lxxxix On Lucan's Pompey as Virgil's Priam, see Narducci 1973 and Hinds 1998: 8-9; see also Mayer 1981 ad *BC* 8.711. For this and another Lucanian rehistoricization in *Aeneid* 2 also suspected by Servius, see Hardie 1993: 30 n.27.

xc For a thoroughgoing analysis of the inversions, see Rossi 2000. See also Ahl 1976: 183-9 and Fantham 1992: 8-9 and ad 85-6, 601-9, 724-5 and 728-30.

xc i Lucan's vitriolic diatribe on Ptolemy (*degener, incestae sceptris cessure sorori*, 8.693) and *noxia... Aegyptia* (8.692-7 and 823-34) is reminiscent also of Propertius' denunciation of Cleopatra (*incesti meretrix regina Canopi*, 3.11.39) and *noxia Alexandria* (3.11.29-68, a passage which laments Pompey's decapitation: cf. esp. vv. 35-8, 68): isolated parallels are noted by Haskins 1887 ad locc.; for one possible connection, see Butrica 1993: 345-6.

xc ii On Dido as Cleopatra, see Syed 2005: 184-93; Pease 1935: 24-8; Camps 1969: 95-6.

xc iii Cf. *Aen.* 1.647-52 (Aeneas gifts Helen's veil to Dido) and *Aen.* 4.300-303 (Dido *bacchatur*: cf. *Aen.* 6.517-8 with n.86 above). On Dido replacing Helen as Aeneas' "unwitting victim and sacrificial substitute", see Suzuki 1989: 98-99 (whence the quotation) and 101-2. On the ironies created by the inset narrative, see Gransden 1985: 62: "How prophetically Dido ought to have understood, and in retrospect interpreted, the events of Book 2. How brilliantly Virgil, the author behind the voice of the heroic narrator, presented the book as a structural paradigm of book 4." On the Helen Episode as an admission to Dido of Aeneas' aberrations from Stoic self-control years earlier, see Hatch 1959; cf. Fish 2004 on the (Epicurean) lessons to be drawn from Aeneas' anger.

xc iv On Dido in Propertius 4.7, see Allison 1980. For a Lacanian response to the different levels of credence given to Cynthia's testimony, see Janan 2001: 100-113.

xc v Thus the majority of critics since Austin 1964: 217-30 and Conte 1986: cf. e.g. Panoussi 2009: 43-4; Syed 2005: 74-9; Fish 2004: 111-38; Bleisch 1999.

xc vi See especially Goold 1970 and Murgia 2003.

xc vii Barchiesi 2001: 161.

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## Pour citer cet article

### Référence électronique

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**Résumé**

This article explores the extent to which the genres of epic and elegy can be considered 'occidental' and 'oriental' respectively. Such a polarity is apparently constructed in the 'epic' and 'elegiac' movements of Propertius 4.1, but it is also progressively deconstructed in Propertius' reception of Virgil's *Aeneid* in elegies 4.1, 4.6 and 4.9. On the one hand, Propertius reads the *Aeneid* for its oriental components (e.g. the Phrygian immigration as viewed by native Italy ; its oriental 'heroines' : Dido, Cleopatra and, if the episode to which she lends her name is not an interpolation, Helen). On the other hand, Propertian elegy has for its part become more occidental (Propertius sings of *maxima Roma* and the Roman victory at Actium ; Cynthia is dead). In this way, Propertius shows that the narrative of elegy is no less bound up with occidental hegemony than that of Virgilian epic, and that elegy's literary exoticism is, like Virgil's intertextual appropriation of Greek literature, itself contingent on Roman imperialism.

**Entrées d'index**

**Mots-clés** : Actium, Aeneid, Cleopatra, Dido, elegy, epic, gender, Helen., Hercules, intertextuality, Lycophron, orientalism, Propertius, Said, Virgil

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